Agency Politics-Independent Study
PS 5312: Fall 2024

Professor: Jessica Velasco, DPA
Office Hours: By appointment
Office Location: LH 210
Telephone: 432-837-8742/505-362-0406
Email Address: jessica.velasco@sulross.edu

Course description: Government agencies fill a variety of roles in our society. In this course, we will seek to understand what agencies are and the many variables that impact the way they fulfill their responsibilities, including staffing, leadership, accountability mechanisms, external pressures, and structural variables.

Course Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

- Explain what a government agency is and its role
- Describe the way government agencies are organized and staffed and how those factors impact the effectiveness of the agency
- Explain the impact of agency leadership
- List and explain the external pressures that impact decision-making in and the functioning of government agencies
- Describe some of the structural variables in government and within agencies that impact decision making and functioning and how those variables impact inter and intraagency cooperation and conflict
- Explain the way government agency performance is measured and how agencies are held accountable
- List and apply strategies that can be used to enhance the performance of government agencies
- Describe how political scholars study government agencies

Required Texts:

There is not a required text for the course. The course readings include articles and government sources that are available online, through the SRSU library, or on Blackboard (in your course shell).

Program Learning Outcomes

Public Administration	Political Science
The graduating student will:	The graduating student will:
• Demonstrate the ability to critique significant theoretical approaches of public administration. • Demonstrate the ability to evaluate domestic and international administrative processes.	• Demonstrate the ability to analyze significant theoretical approaches of political science • Demonstrate the ability to evaluate domestic and international political processes

• Demonstrate the ability to apply appropriate statistical tools for quantitative analysis.	• Demonstrate the ability to apply appropriate statistical tools for quantitative analysis

Public Administration	**Political Science**
• Students can organize and execute presentations relevant to public administration • Students understand and can execute a program evaluation • Students can conduct statistical analyses that are useful to the work of public administrators. • Students can read and interpret an organization budget	• Students can organize and execute verbal and written presentations of complex social issues • Students can tackle social and political problems by acquiring relevant data and using insight and technical skills to analyze data and develop logical solutions • Students understand the roles and responsibilities of institutional authority within local, state, national, and international communities. • Students understand and can execute a policy analysis

GRADING

Grades in this class will be determined by the number of points you earn by the end of the course. The point distribution is listed below:

Initial Reflection	50		A	895-1000 points
Article Summaries (100 x 3)	300		B	795-894 POINTS
Case Study Responses (4 x 50)	200		C	695-794 POINTS
Speaker /Webinar Reaction Papers (50 x 3)	150		D	595-694 POINTS
			F	BELOW 595 POINTS
Agency Analysis	300			
Total	1000			

ASSIGNMENTS:

Baseline/Initial Reflection: During the second week, you will be submitting an initial reflection about government agencies based on a series of prompts. The instructions and rubric are provided on Blackboard. This is worth 50 points.

Article Summaries: To help familiarize you peer-reviewed scholarly studies, I provided several journal articles to read. Every few weeks, you will need to select one of them and summarize it, using the template that is provided on Blackboard. You will have 3 summaries total. These are each worth 100 points. They will be due by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. each of the weeks they are due.

Case Study Responses: You will have 4 case studies to respond to this semester. These will be timed assessments on Blackboard, where you are provided a case study scenario and asked to apply approaches from the readings. These are each worth 50 points. You may take them at any time during the week they are due, but they will be due by Sunday at 11:59 p.m. You will have two hours to complete the response once you enter the assessment.

Speaker/Webinar Summary/Reaction Papers: Throughout the semester, I will be providing you with information about webinars related to the course and public administration. I will also provide you the recordings of class speakers from the previous semester. Although I encourage you to attend as many webinars and listen as many recordings as possible, you will need to write summary/reaction papers for THREE of these. Each will be worth 50 points, and more information and a rubric are provided in Blackboard. To avoid having a pile of extra grading at the end of the semester, I have assigned deadlines throughout the semester for these assignments.

Agency Analysis: Your major paper for the course will be an agency analysis. You will be selecting an agency to analyze using the readings and information from the course. More instructions and a rubric are provided on Blackboard. These are due by 11:59 p.m. on December 6. You are welcome (and encouraged) to set up a meeting with me if you want to talk more about your paper.

Class Meetings: This is an independent study of an online, asynchronous class. Therefore, there are not any required meeting times.

Calendar (subject to change)

W	Week of	Topic	Reading	Assignments
1	8/26-9/1	Introduction to the course	Syllabus	Read the Syllabus & Submit a list of possible agencies for your agency analysis (on discussion board on Blackboard by Sunday, 9/1, at 11:59 p.m.
2	9/2-9/8	Introduction to government agencies	ACUS Sourcebook (through page 62)	Initial/Baseline reflection due by Sunday at 11:59 p.m.
3	9/9-9/15	Staffing/Personnel, Leadership	ACUS Sourcebook (pp. 62-81) and readings on Blackboard	Article Summary #1
4	9/16-9/22	Staffing (Continued)	BB readings	Case Study #1
5	9/23-9/29	Presidential influence	BB readings	Work on Agency Analysis
6	9/30-10/6	Presidential influence (cont'd)	BB readings	Webinar/Speaker Reaction #1
7	10/7-10/13	Congressional influence	BB readings	Case Study #2
8	10/14-10/20	Decision-making	ACUS Sourcebook (pp. 82-120) & BB readings	Article Summary #2

9	10/21-10/27	Cooperation & Conflict	BB readings	Case Study #3
10	10/28-11/3	Cooperation & Conflict (cont'd)	BB readings	Work on Agency Analysis
11	11/4-11/10	Other topics	BB readings	Webinar/Speaker Reaction #2
12	11/11-11/17	Other topics	ACUS Sourcebook (pp. 121-124) BB readings	Case Study #4
13	11/18-11/24	Other countries	BB readings	Article Summary #3
14	11/25-12/1			Final Speaker/Webinar Reaction Due
15	12/2-12/6	Agency Analysis Paper		**Agency Analysis due by 11:59 p.m. on December 6, 2024**

Other important dates:

- 8/29, Last day for registration and schedule changes
- 9/2, Labor Day Holiday, no classes
- 9/11, Last day to drop a 16 week class without a record
- 9/17, National Voter Registration Day
- 9/27, Community Meal on the Mall
- 10/7, Last day to register to vote in the November election (in Texas)
- 11/5, Election Day
- 11/8, Last day to withdraw with a "W" (16 week classes)
- 11/27-11/29-Thanksgiving Holiday (no classes on these days)
- 12/4, Last class day before finals
- 12/5, Dead day
- 12/6 & 12/9-12/11, Final Exams

WHAT YOU CAN EXPECT FROM ME:

- I will provide regular communication with through announcements (email and posted on Blackboard), email notifications, and virtual office hours.
- I will provide email responses within 24 hours of receipt during the hours of 9 a.m.-4 p.m., Monday-Friday.
- I will provide grades and feedback for assignments within one week of the submission due date.
- I will provide clear and concise instructions on how to complete the online course requirements.
- I will provide a range of opportunities to engage in the course content in a meaningful way.

- I will do my best to stay abreast of the current research in the field to help you get the best possible experience in the course.

- You will familiarize yourself with the course syllabus, policies, assessments, evaluation, grading criteria, and course design.
- You will acquire the tools necessary to be successful in this class. This includes the book, reliable Internet access, and a device other than your phone for completing assignments.
- You will complete all assigned readings and coursework by assigned due dates.
- You will engage with me using open and appropriate communication
- You will be diligent about using communication in a way that shows respect to me
- You will submit graduate-level work that has been checked carefully for errors in spelling, grammar, and punctuation (using a free extension like Grammarly is recommended).
- You will respond to communication from me in a timely manner (within 24 hours).
- You will not plagiarize the work of others or yourself, and you will also not collaborate with others on class assignments (unless clearly authorized to do so)
- You will reach out to me immediately if you are having trouble in the class or with access to course materials (although please call the Help Desk--888.837.6055 for general access issues)

OTHER COURSE POLICIES & RESOURCES

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY: Students in this class are expected to demonstrate scholarly behavior and academic honesty in the use of intellectual property. Students should submit work that is their own and avoid engaging in behaviors that violate academic integrity, such as turning in work as original that was used in whole or part for another course and/or professor; turning in another person's work as one's own; copying from professional works or internet sites without citation; collaborating on a course assignment, examination, or quiz when collaboration is forbidden. Students should also avoid using open AI sources *unless permission is expressly given* for an assignment or course. Violations of academic integrity can result in failing assignments, failing a class, and/or more serious university consequences. These behaviors also erode the value of college degrees and higher education overall.

As an SRSU student, it is your responsibility to read and understand the university's expectations about academic integrity. All violations will be taken seriously and handled through the appropriate university process. The policy can be found at: https://www.sulross.edu/about/administration/university-policies/

In addition, please note that plagiarism detection software will be used in this class for written assignments. Respondus Lockdown Browser will be used for the case study assessments as well.

If you have any questions about this, please ask!

LATE WORK: I have been very intentional about how I have designed this course and distributed the content to optimize your learning and comprehension. Trying to cram weeks of work into a few days or waiting until the end of the semester to do everything isn't conducive to learning. For this reason, you must have an extenuating circumstance and approval from me to submit late work. If you submit late work without an approved extension from me, I reserve the right not to grade it. Communication is key.

INCOMPLETE POLICY: We do have the ability to assign students an incomplete at the end of a course. However, two conditions are typically required for an incomplete to be granted: 1) an extenuating

circumstance, and 2) most of the work for the course has been completed. In our program, we have been very flexible with this policy, especially during COVID. However, we are not seeing the best results from students who are granted this option. In addition, we feel that it has created a level of unfairness for students who finish all their work by the stated deadlines. Therefore, not only will we be using this option more sparingly, but we reserve the right to assess a grade letter penalty for incomplete classes. In addition, the max extension for an incomplete is 6 months, and incompletes are calculated as an "F" in your GPA until you have successfully completed the final assignments.

COURSE BLACKBOARD RESOURCES: There are several resources on the course Blackboard page. You are expected to review and familiarize yourself with the items in Blackboard in the first week of class. NOTE: Please post general, course-related questions to the discussion board forum I have set up for this. Typically, if one student in the class has the question, others do as well. Please allow 24 hours for a response, and then feel free to email me or call me directly with your question.

ALPINE LIBRARY INFORMATION
The Bryan Wildenthal Memorial Library in Alpine offers FREE resources and services to the entire SRSU community. Access and borrow books, articles, and more by visiting the library's website, library.sulross.edu/. Off-campus access requires logging in with your LobolD and password. Librarians are a tremendous resource for your coursework and can be reached in person, by email (srsulibrary@sulross.edu), or by phone (432-837-8123).

No matter where you are based, public libraries and many academic and special libraries welcome the general public into their spaces for study. SRSU TexShare Cardholders can access additional services and resources at various libraries across Texas. Learn more about the TexShare program by visiting library.sulross.edu/find-and-borrow/texshare/ or ask a librarian by emailing srsulibrary@sulross.edu.

ADA STATEMENT
SRSU Accessibility Services. Sul Ross State University (SRSU) is committed to equal access in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1973. It is SRSU policy to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. It is the student's responsibility to initiate a request each semester for each class. Students seeking accessibility/accommodations services must contact Mrs. Mary Schwartze Grisham, LPC, SRSU's Accessibility Services Director at 432-837-8203 or email mschwartze@sulross.edu. Our office is located on the first floor of Ferguson Hall, room 112, and our mailing address is P.O. Box C122, Sul Ross State University, Alpine. Texas, 79832. **Please note that instructors are not permitted to provide accommodations to a student until the appropriate verification has been received.**

COUNSELING SERVICES
Sul Ross has partnered with TimelyCare where all SR students will have access to nine free counseling sessions. You can learn more about this 24/7/356 support by visiting Timelycare/SRSU. The SR Counseling and Accessibility Services office will continue to offer in-person counseling in Ferguson Hall room 112 (Alpine campus), and telehealth Zoom sessions for remote students and RGC students.

SRSU DISTANCE EDUCATION STATEMENT
Students enrolled in distance education courses have equal access to the university's academic support services, such as library resources, online databases, and instructional technology support. For more information about accessing these resources, visit the SRSU website. Students should correspond using Sul Ross email accounts and submit online assignments through Blackboard, which requires a secure login. Students enrolled in distance education courses at Sul Ross are expected to adhere to all policies

pertaining to academic honesty and appropriate student conduct, as described in the student handbook. Students in web-based courses must maintain appropriate equipment and software, according to the needs and requirements of the course, as outlined on the SRSU website. Directions for filing a student complaint are located in the student handbook.

BLACKBOARD TECHNICAL SUPPORT: SRSU 24/7 Blackboard Technical Support Online Support Desk Contact Info: Toll Free: 888.837.6055. Email: blackboardsupport@sulross.edu

IMPORTANT NOTES ON GRADUATE COURSEWORK AND COMPREHENSIVE EXAMS

Grades: In graduate school, a "C" is required to pass the class. In addition, you must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA to remain in good standing. The program faculty evaluate the progress of students in the program at the end of each semester. Just maintaining a "B" average in the program is not enough to be deemed eligible to continue in the program or to complete the comprehensive exam.

Comprehensive Exam: A comprehensive exam is required in the final semester of coursework for MA-PS and MPA students. More information can be found on our program's website. Please make sure to save copies of all of your papers, assignments, and books. These will assist you in the comprehensive exam.